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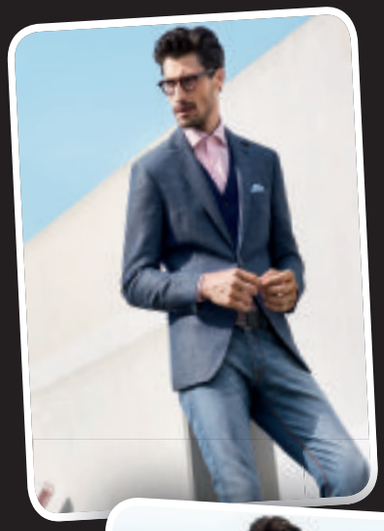

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Firefighters reach new heights during training exercise

THIS is the daring moment firefighters suspended themselves high above a rapidly developing retirement living scheme in Banbury.

The team from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service took part in a dramatic training exercise at the £12m Park Gardens complex in Bath Road.

The specialist team of five, based in Kidlington, scaled the top of the 115ft crane before re-enacting a rope rescue drill.

Over the course of the day the team got experience of working at heights within an "emergency" scenario.

Rope rescue instructor Owen Pates said: "This exercise gave my team added familiarity and exposure of working at such heights as well as the basic operation of cranes.

"We have various techniques for rescuing people from cranes so this session gave us the opportunity to go through them in detail."

Site manager Peter Marr said: "They've certainly got more nerve than I have as you wouldn't have got me on top of that crane."

Firefighters dangle more than 100ft off the ground as part of the Banbury training exercise

Seven doctors are due in posts at hospital by summer

HOPE RETURNS FOR BABY UNIT

Hannah Somerville
hannah.somerville@nqo.com

HOPES have been revived for a full maternity service at the Horton General Hospital as seven doctors are due to be in post by the summer.

But there are still doubts over whether a full team of doctors will be able to be secured, as well as a question mark over the future of a 24/7 ambulance service.

Last week board members at Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH) were told two more doctors would be joining the current five in June or July.

In a written update for the OUH board, clinical services director Paul Brennan said: "The current recruitment round closes on May 28.

"The quality committee continues to keep under review the register of risks associated with the temporary suspension of maternity and neonatal services at HGH."

Since October the Horton has run a midwifery-led unit due to a lack of doctors, with 'high-risk' pregnant women and those who face complications in birth taken to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford.

At the board meeting OUH repeated that nine consultants were needed to bring back the full service – so they could be rotated between Banbury and the JR as an incentive to stay.

It means that while seven doctors make the return of a full maternity service more likely, two more would still be needed to ensure it becomes a reality.

Meanwhile board papers revealed up to £800,000 has been spent on retaining a dedicated ambulance to take women to the JR, which may not be retained past this year.

Keith Strangwood, chairman of the Keep the Horton General campaign, said: "We have been talking to them about rotation for about 18 months.

"The fact they're waiting until they have nine doctors is a bit unreasonable but positive; at least they are starting to listen."

"We should open the unit tomorrow with seven doctors because every day we leave it there's another life at stake."

Meanwhile the Conservative parliamentary candidate for Banbury, Victoria Prentis, took Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt on a tour of the Horton last Thursday, but did not invite any press or members of the public.

Following the visit, which Mrs Prentis said had been 'helpful' for articulating the plight of the hospital, she said: "Given the depth of feeling locally I was worried that any advertising of his visit might result in a demonstration. There is a time and a place for peaceful protests such as the Hands Around Our Horton event last year, this was not it."

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Fruitful progression of primary school as new centre is opened

Play sessions are now being offered for families with very young children

Luke Sproule
lsproule@nqo.com

A PRIMARY school is offering play sessions for under-fives after opening a new centre.

Bloxham Primary School's new Cherry Tree Centre will cater for families with young children on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9.30am to 11am with toys, a baby area and arts and crafts activities.

The 413-pupil school was rated good by Ofsted in March and its headteacher Matthew Ingall was recently recognised as a 'national leader in education' under a Government scheme where the best school leaders and their teams offer support to other schools.

Mr Ingall said the opening of the new Cherry Tree Centre, following on from excellent SATs results in 2016, showed the school was moving in the right direction.

He said: "Results like this come from a whole group of people – staff, children, parents, governors and community leaders all working together.

"In fact just in February our deputy head Julie Oatridge wrote a blog post starting with the words 'TEAM equals Together Everyone Achieves More'.

"I couldn't agree more.

'We were already pleased to be part of the Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance, which is a great network for sharing teaching and learning excellence across the county, but these latest results and awards are, if you like, the icing and the cherry on the cake.

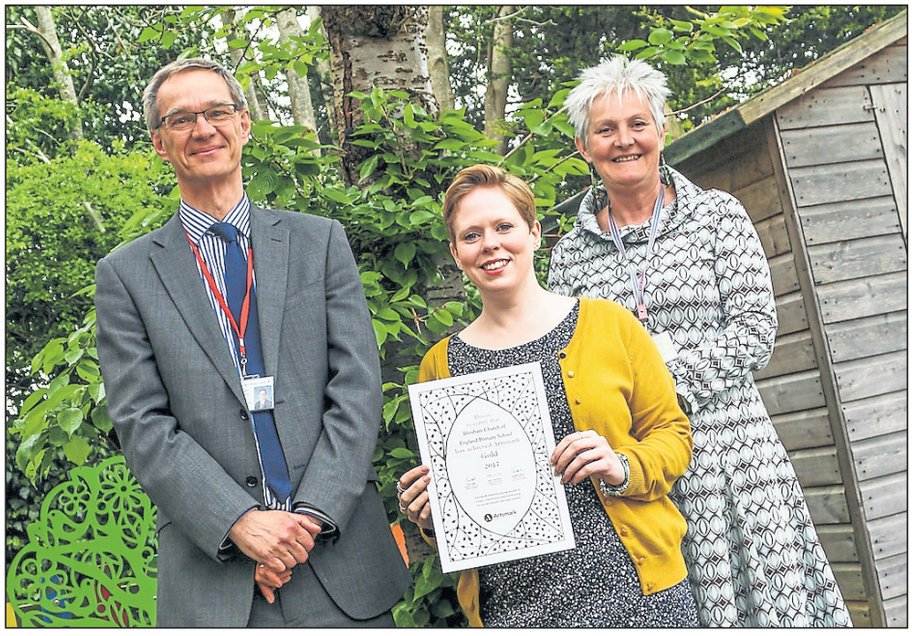
"We have so much to be thankful for here at Bloxham Primary School, we wouldn't have been able to open our new Cherry Tree Centre without the support of Bloxham, Milcombe and Adderbury parish councils for example.

"I'd like to thank and congratulate everyone involved with the school, not least of all our wonderful children and staff for all their hard work and commitment."

The school's next big goal is a festival in the playground of music and other fun entertainment on Saturday, June 17 from 2pm to 9pm.

The school has seventeen teaching staff, including specialist music and sports teachers, with a leadership team of five.

The Cherry Tree Centre is situated within the school and it officially opened on May 3.



Matthew Ingall, head teacher, Michell Coles, Year 3 teacher, and school music teacher with the Artsmark Gold Certificate, Julie Oatridge, deputy head teacher

Local heroes step it up on the dancefloor

Dance competition provides great entertainment while raising thousands for charity

Naomi Herring
nherring@nqo.com

GLAMMED-UP amateur dancers strutted their stuff as they performed to a packed-out theatre for this year's Strictly Banbury charity competition.

A host of local personalities have been working hard over the past eight weeks with their semi-professional dance partners ahead of the grand finale of performances staged last weekend.

The competition went off with a bang as three shows were held over two days and raised more than £10,000 for charity.

Dance couple Rebekah Pawley and Jarek Kepski were crowned king and queen of the dancefloor on Sunday night, whilst fellow partners Louissa Lella and Graham Taylor took home the title on both Saturday performances.

Speaking after the Sunday night win, Mr Kepski said: "The main thing Rebekah said to me was just go out there and enjoy it and I did.

"I have enjoyed it so much I didn't want any stress, I just wanted to have fun.

"The whole experience has been great, the transformation too and clearly we have got better.

"I just couldn't believe it tonight."

The charity competition inspired by the BBC show was this year raising money for three charities – Age UK, Dogs for Good and the Oxford Children's Hospital.

The total money raised so far includes £1,457 from a raffle for Age UK Oxfordshire's phone service, which helps support thousands of lonely people across the county.

The remaining £10,566 raised by the contest will be split between both Oxford Children's Hospital and Dogs for Good.

The event was staged by dance school Step by Step.

Dance teacher and event organiser Glenda Harper said: "Its just been really energetic and all our local heroes have been amazing, caring and looking after each other the whole way through.

"It has been a really high standard.

"It was just a really nice event and raised lots of money for three amazing charities."

Strictly Banbury Sunday winners Rebekah Pawley and Jarek Kepski

Witnesses to robbery near church sought

A MAN is being sought by police following an early morning robbery in Banbury.

The offender approached a man walking through a side road near St Mary's Church and demanded his phone, shoes and jacket at about 6.30am last Friday.

He then left the scene and is believed to have been spotted driving a purple Honda with a pink child's seat in the front.

A man in his 20s was walking down a side road off Horsefair Road, opposite the pedestrian crossing in front of the Church House Pub, adjacent to St Mary's Church.

As he neared the church he was approached by a man, believed to be in his late 20s, who pushed the victim into the side road and demanded he hand over his phone.

The victim gave the man his iPhone 7. The offender then demanded the victim's shoes, hi viz jacket, and the jacket he was wearing underneath.

The offender then left the scene. He is believed to have been seen in a dark purple Honda with a pink child's seat in the front.

He is described as black, around 6ft 4ins, with short black hair and wearing a black jacket, trousers and shoes.

No injuries were inflicted on the victim during the incident.

The victim's black iPhone 7, in a black case, was stolen, along with the several items of the victim's clothing and his black Dunlop safety boots.

Investigating officer PC Widdison from Bicester Police Station, said: "This was a distressing incident for the victim and we are appealing for the public's help in order to locate this offender.

"As part of the investigation, we would urge anyone who witnessed the incident to please come forward.

"We would appeal to anyone with any information to please call the 24-hour enquiry centre on 101, quoting incident number 43170129091."

Pictured above is Blenheim Palace operations director Heather Carter

Work experience pupils told to mind their six 'Ps'

Luke Sproule
lsproule@nqo.com

SOME of the county's biggest businesses have given young people tips as they get their first taste of the world of work.

As many school pupils take on work experience placements in the coming weeks, responsible business group Reciprocate has published an open letter to them.

Many of the companies that make up the group – such as Allen Associates, the Ashmolean Museum and Oxford Bus Company – have years of experience offering placements to pupils in Year 10 and Year 11.

The letter was sent out to 19 schools across Oxfordshire to share with 3,000 pupils due on work experience in May, June and July.

The letter reads: "We're so pleased that you are taking on a work placement this year and want to wholeheartedly encourage you in this experience.

"To help you settle in to your placement we thought you might like to hear some top tips from the point of view of the employer to help you make a good impression during your placement and get as much out of it as you can."

The letter outlines six 'Ps' : be professional, be prepared, be polite, put yourself out there, be practical and take time to ponder.

It continues: "If you can get these things right who knows where your placement might lead you."

The letter was drawn up with the help of local youth work charity Thrive.

Its development manager Robin Peake said: "For some young people, who have grown up knowing doctors or lawyers, these professions seem normal.

"But for some young people, they feel alien.

"When a young person's role models are unemployed, it's little wonder that they have low aspirations for their work experience placement.

"I'm delighted that Oxfordshire Community Foundation and Reciprocate are levelling the playing field by letting every young person know what to do to have a successful work experience placement.

"These tips will demystify the process and help young people unleash their potential."

Each of the six 'Ps' comes with advice, such as being as communicative as possible and making notes before and during the placement.

Blenheim Palace is a member of reciprocate and took the lead in producing the letter alongside construction company Beard and work-experience brokerage service O2i.

Blenheim Palace operations director Heather Carter said: "It is so important that businesses invest time and effort into encouraging young people to consider their future careers.

"Offering opportunities to them in the workplace in a planned way is hugely beneficial in this process."

Phone app can help you make noise complaints

A NOISE nuisance app has been launched by Cherwell District Council for people to submit noise complaints.

The app is hoped to make it easier for recording evidence of nuisance noise of behaviour on a smartphone.

Once residents have reported the problem the app can be used for supporting evidence which is immediately uploaded for officers to look at.

Cherwell District Council lead member for public protection Tony Ilott said: "No-one should have to put up with excessively noisy neighbours. This sort of nuisance can be highly aggravating and we don't want our residents losing sleep over it.

"Thankfully, new technology is on the side of the victim, and we are pleased to be moving with the times and subscribing to the Noise App service.

"It is a quick and effective way for people to submit evidence of a problem, and we believe it will help us bring about a resolution more swiftly and efficiently."

Noise nuisance can still be reported to the council online or by phone and despite using the app the council will still need to monitor noise and where necessary host visits.

The council said the app is already being used successfully. For details on downloading the app free for Android or iPhone see cherwell.gov.uk/noiseapps.

Patient numbers at A&E hit new record

Health bosses stumped as attendances at county's hospitals soar to over 450 a day

Hannah Somerville
hannah.somerville@nqo.com

Paramedics bring a patient into A&E at the John Radcliffe Hospital

A RECORD number of people are turning up at A&E departments in Oxfordshire, with health bosses admitting they can't explain the rise.

Board members at Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH) were told that the number of daily attendances at the Horton General Hospital and at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford is the highest it has ever been.

Some 450 to 460 patients are going to A&E every day while over the winter the daily rate was at about 400, and 370 leading up to that.

Addressing the board last week, director of clinical services Paul Brennan said: "We are at a loss at the moment to understand what's causing this.

"I was down there with colleagues and these aren't minor injuries patients and not just elderly; these are very poorly, sick people."

He added that between 95 and 97 per cent of general acute beds, and beds for acute surgery and trauma, were occupied on a given day.

At the same time, Mr Brennan said 90 to 100 patients were still unnecessarily stuck in acute hospital beds each day.

He said: "Delayed transfer of care levels have climbed again to a level we haven't seen for more than 16 months. It's way higher than we were achieving last year."

In the past 18 months OUH has invested hundreds of thousands of pounds into projects to speed up patients' routes through and out of hospital.

It has included the Home Assessment Reablement Team, which supports patients at home, and the liaison hub, a step-down service for those waiting for a care home place.

It comes after a report published last week by the Care Quality Commission gave A&E at the JR a repeat 'Requires Improvement' rating.

While acknowledging the hard work of staff in the department, they noted patients were facing long waits and capacity was too low, impacting on safety.

Prof George Smith, the new chairman of Healthwatch Oxfordshire, said: "What we are seeing in the emergency department is a system stretched to the limit.

"We have to take a step back and look at the broader context of the whole hospital, and social care. Flow through the system is not working properly."

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Driver spared jail after bid to outrun officers

Offender drove car on pavement and crashed into parked vehicles

Annabal Bagdi
abagdi@nqo.com

AN UNINSURED learner driver tried to evade police by driving along a pavement and ended up smashing into parked cars.

Richard York confessed he had not passed his driving test when he attempted to avoid officers during the four-minute pursuit.

The scaffolder looked at the floor throughout his hearing at Oxford Crown Court before walking from the dock with a six-month sentence, suspended for 18 months.

He was sentenced by Judge Maria Lamb, who also ordered him to carry out 150 hours of unpaid work and gave him a 21-month driving ban.

She said: "This was a pretty appalling piece of driving. I think I would be perfectly justified sending you straight to prison but it would not be a particularly long sentence and I have to weigh up whether in fact there are more constructive ways you can put right the damage that you did.

"This is not a let-off, this is a threat hanging over your head to remind you how serious this was and why there should be no repetition. I don't want to hear that you have been back in front of the courts again. This is a last chance."

Police were out on patrol in The Fairway, Banbury, when they spotted York's blue Vauxhall Astra in an 'unroadworthy condition', prosecutor Robert Lindsey told the court on Thursday.

Officers tried to catch up with the defendant but he sped off, reaching speeds of 50mph in 20mph zones, the court was told.

York, of Mold Crescent, Banbury, also went along a pavement, crashed into two other vehicles and caused damage to the police car and his vehicle.

York, who had no relevant previous convictions, had never taken a driving test and was behind the wheel without any learner plates, Dr Lindsey said.

He told interviewing officers he 'panicked' when officers started chasing him as he made his way to his father's house, claiming 'adrenalin kicked in'.

York, who confessed his insurance policy had lapsed when he was driving, went on to tell police: "When I did stop, I got out and put my hands up and said sorry."

The 22-year-old, who was ordered to pay £450 costs and abide by a curfew, was unrepresented at the hearing after telling Judge Lamb he did not want to adjourn to instruct solicitors but instead wanted to 'get on with his life'.

He admitted dangerous driving, driving otherwise than in accordance with a licence and driving without third party insurance on January 23.

Top awards for care home workers

Fiona Mayfield, right, receiving her award

A WOMAN from a care home in Banbury was among more than 100 people given awards for dedicating their lives to looking after others.

The Orders of St John Care Trust (OSJCT) celebrated its sixth year hosting an awards ceremony to mark the special work its staff do.

The Trust's annual Oxfordshire Employee Awards were staged against the grand background of the famous Randolph Hotel in Oxford on May 11.

Fiona Mayfield, from Larkrise Care Home in Banbury, took home the Newcomer of the Year award.

Lisa Bentley of the Old Station House in Abingdon won Carer of the Year.

The judges said: "Lisa has only worked in the home since May 2016 and already she has become a very valued member of the team."

Other winners on the night included Leader of the Year Natalie Leigh from Glebe House in Kidlington and Haley Williams from Stirlings Care Home in Wantage, who took home the Hospitality Award.

Lucinda Hall from Langford View in Bicester took home the title of Young Carer of the Year.

Many more staff were honoured.

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Family firm is snapped up by US

Gill Oliver
goliver@nqo.com

A FAMILY-OWNED engineering firm in Banbury has been snapped up by a US corporation in a £56m deal.

Norbar Torque Tools has been acquired by Snap-On Inc, which is listed on the New York Stock Exchange and has 12,000 workers.

Norbar bosses pledged the Wildmere Road company, which employs 300, will continue as before.

It took on four staff at the beginning of this month and is recruiting more.

Managing director Neill Brodey, whose grandfather started the company in 1943 to supply wrenches for use on Spitfire, Hurricane and Lancaster aeroplane engines during the Second World War, said: "There are no planned changes to the business.

"Snap-On bought us because they like us and they like what we do."

A third of Norbar's sales of torque tools, used for tightening nuts and bolts in aerospace, automotive industries, come from EU countries.

Before last June's EU referendum, Mr Brodey and his fellow board members wrote to employees urging them to vote Remain.

Although Mr Brodey said Brexit was not behind the decision to sell, he said it 'weighed on our minds'.

He explained: "The issue with Brexit is that whatever happens it will be harder to do business with customers in mainland Europe."

"We campaigned fiercely to remain. Having lost that battle, we looked at our strategy and saw it is going to cost our customers 10 per cent more to do business with us and they won't like it."

Norbar has subsidiaries in India and Singapore plus joint ventures in USA and China and has twice received the Queen's Award for International Trade. It sees the deal with Snap-On as an opportunity to boost sales in markets outside the EU.

The two firms have a long-running relationship, which began when Norbar founder William 'Bill' Brodey became the UK distributor for Snap-On tools in the 1940s.

Mr Brodey said: "Snap-On are an amazing company we have done business with for many years – we are a supplier of theirs and they are well known and respected."

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ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

Dementia Friends

Specsavers' optical and hearing teams become Dementia Friends

With visual impairments common among those with dementia, Specsavers is ensuring a trip to the opticians and audiologists is as comfortable as possible for them.

In the run up to Dementia Awareness Week (15-21 May), Specsavers employees nationwide are becoming Dementia Friends, an initiative run by the Alzheimer's Society. Every store now has at least one team member who is a Dementia Friend and understands the needs of customers with dementia a little more. The Specsavers Healthcall teams that carry out home visits are also becoming Dementia Friends.

Specsavers is also using Dementia Awareness Week to remind anyone over 55 to undergo regular hearing tests, as research suggests that people with untreated hearing loss are more likely to develop Alzheimer's. Hearing tests are free at Specsavers.

Dr Nigel Best, Specsavers clinical spokesperson, says: 'People with dementia may not be able to recognise or articulate the issues that many of us face when we begin to lose our sight or hearing – but the effects are the same. Being more aware of dementia is an incredibly positive development for our teams and our offering to customers.'

Those with dementia commonly experience problems with their sight and visual perception, causing them to misinterpret the world around them. Some sufferers can experience hallucinations. On top of that, research has revealed that almost half of dementia patients in care homes are wearing glasses with the wrong prescription, leading to increased isolation.

Laura Stallerbrass, store manager at Specsavers Forfar, has encouraged all her team to do Dementia Friends.

'We aim to provide a safe environment for all of our customers. I can definitely see a shift in attitudes to dementia which is lovely to experience.'

Specsavers

Dementia Friends

Specsavers supports Dementia Friends

Inspectors praise hospital team

Compassion and care of staff at operating theatres noted in report

Hannah Somerville
hannah.somerville@nqo.com

WORLD-CLASS surgical skills and the dedication of teams at the John Radcliffe Hospital has been recognised by inspectors in a newly-published report.

The compassion and care of staff across eight operating theatres at the Headington site was praised by the Care Quality Commission following a visit on October 11 and 12 last year.

Surgery at the JR, formerly rated 'Requires Improvement', has received a 'Good' rating across all areas in the report.

In their summary, inspectors said: "There was a safe number of staff with appropriate skills, training and experience to keep patients safe.

"Ward and theatre areas were clean and tidy; we saw most staff following good infection prevention. There was strong multi-disciplinary working across teams."

More than 35,000 surgical procedures were carried out at the JR in the 2015/16 financial year, of which more than a third are emergency and almost half are day cases such as cataract operations and appendectomies.

The eight theatres that were visited are used for emergency, spinal, vascular, cardiac and plastic surgery, as well as trauma and neurosurgery.

Paediatric neuro-surgeon Jay Jayamohan and neurosurgical senior registrar Andy Manning performing an operation at the John Radcliffe Hospital

The CQC noted: "We saw staff treated patients with compassion and care. They were kind and treated them with dignity and respect.

"There were systems to support patients with additional or complex needs. Patients felt informed and involved in their care."

Surgical procedures at the John Radcliffe Hospital have been televised many times over the years and staff are often first in line to use cutting-edge technology due to cross-over with the Oxford Biomedical Research Centre (BRC).

The CQC inspectors also pointed out that when things did go wrong surgical staff were quick to flag up problems and learn from them.

Between October 2015 and July 2016 there were six 'never events' in surgery, defined as incidents that should never happen, including an incorrect lens implant and an incorrect nerve block during cataract surgery.

But inspectors said: "The trust had investigated each incident and had an overarching action plan in place with a particular focus on human factors training.

"These events were published in the trust newsletter for all trust staff to learn from the incident."

Elsewhere in its report the CQC praised the efforts and caring nature of NHS staff across the board.

Professor Richards said: "Staff we spoke to valued and respected the needs of patients and their families.

"Staff took account of the needs of different people, including those with complex needs when planning and delivering services.

"There was an open culture within the hospital."

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust welcomed the report.

Chief executive Bruno Holthof said: "The positive overall tone of the report is extremely encouraging and our staff should be rightfully proud, particularly given ongoing heavy demand on our services.

"The Trust Board and I also recognise that there have been great improvements as part of urgent and emergency care, and we would like to thank staff in our emergency services for their continued hard work.

"The CQC has identified aspects of care in which the trust must improve and we are already in the process of producing an action plan."

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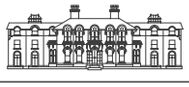

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Phillips aims to put Banbury women's team on the map

Manager will use his experience to mould and reform his side

Michael Knox
mike.knox@nqo.com

KEVIN Phillips has spoken of his joy at being appointed manager of Banbury United's re-formed women's side.

Phillips, who has extensive experience of men's and women's teams over the past 10 years, will be assisted by Kath Faulkner.

She spent 18 years playing in senior women's football, this included eight seasons with Oxford United.

Phillips, who was a member of the under 21 teams at Borussia Dortmund and FC Schalke as a player, said: "I am proud to have been appointed manager.

"The women's game has changed over the past 10 years through the support of the FA and their new 'Gameplan for Growth'. It's an exciting time to be part of women's football.

"Women's teams at Banbury United have had previous success over the years and my ambition is to put the team on the map once again.

"I also look forward to working with Kath who will be working in a coaching capacity," added Phillips, who has managed sides in the Banbury District & Lord Jersey League, including re-forming and managing Ashton Villa with whom he is still involved as chairman.

Commenting on the announcement, Banbury United's vice-chairman Martin Cantrell said, "These are very exciting appointments, and we are confident that they will lead to the club having a vibrant and successful women's team that is attractive to local players."

Banbury intend to apply to join the Thames Valley Counties Women's League for next season, playing matches on a Sunday afternoon.

Home games will be played at the Banbury Plant Hire Community Stadium.

Players over 16 who are interested in playing for Banbury should email women@banburyunitedfc.co.uk or phone Phillips on 07734 060314.

Banbury United are pleased to announce the appointment of Kevin Phillips as manager of their Womenâ s Team who will be assisted by Kath Faulkner

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Charity helping older residents gets a £2,000 boost from M&S

Funds help volunteers deliver services and publicise their efforts

Hannah Somerville
hannah.somerville@nqo.com

RVS volunteer Dave Judge and fundraising singer Sarah Wade with her husband Andrew and staff at Marks and Spencer Banbury

A LONG-ESTABLISHED charity caring for older people in North Oxfordshire has received a £2,000 boost from a retailer.

The Royal Voluntary Service was selected as charity of the year by the Banbury Castle Quay Marks & Spencer store in April 2016.

Over the past year staff have been collecting on behalf of the charity, which provides vital services to elderly and often isolated people in Banbury.

On Thursday, Steve Kilsby, service manager at the Cornhill Centre-based charity, received a £2,000 cheque from staff at the store.

He said: "We are very grateful to receive this funding from our local M&S. We know that many older people in the area rely on the centre to socialise and stay active.

"This funding will help us deliver our services and also publicise the wonderful activities we have on offer at the Cornhill Centre so more local people can get involved."

The Royal Voluntary Service in Banbury exists to enrich the lives of older people and ensure they can continue to live life to the full.

It offers schemes such as Good Neighbours, where volunteers provide practical support for older people in their homes.

At the centre visitors can also enjoy a daily lunch club and activities such as dancing and gentle exercise.

Nationally the charity supports 100,000 older people each month with services including community transport and books on wheels.

Rhys Bull, store manager at Marks & Spencer Banbury Castle Quay, said: "We are so pleased to have been able to support the Royal Voluntary Services as our charity of the year.

"They are a vital resource to the elderly residents within our community, and provide services for a number of our valued customers.

"I would personally like to thank all of my colleagues for their fundraising efforts and commitment to raising funds for a great cause."

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Monster hit, unlike Arthur

COLOSSAL *(15, 109 mins) Sci-Fi/Drama/Comedy/Romance/Action. Anne Hathaway, Jason Sudeikis, Dan Stevens, Tim Blake Nelson, Austin Stowell. Director: Nacho Vigalondo.*

Spanish writer-director Nacho Vigalondo plays with madness in his brilliantly bonkers homage to Godzilla, which projects the monster-mashing mayhem through the lens of an offbeat indie romantic comedy.

Thematically, there are faint echoes of M. Night Shyamalan's unconventional superhero film Unbreakable, but Colossal is very much its own beast, anchored by an eye-catching performance from Anne Hathaway as a struggling alcoholic, whose recovery coincides with the emergence of a towering creature on the other side of the world.

Jason Sudeikis also plays against type to delicious effect as a bar owner, whose jealousy conjures something scarier and far more destructive than a green-eyed behemoth.

The leads enjoy simmering on-screen chemistry that lights the touchpaper on cataclysmic events on two continents, positing tantalising questions about the thin line separating unlikely heroes from villains.

Predictability has been largely eradicated from the picture's warped DNA and we take great delight from the twists and turns in Vigalondo's fantastical narrative, augmented with impressive digital effects.

New York City party girl Gloria (Hathaway) fails to get a grip on her hard-drinking ways and her straight-laced boyfriend Tim (Dan Stevens) throws her out of his apartment.

Gloria returns in shame to her sleepy upstate home town to crash in her parents' old house, which has been vacant since they retired to sunnier climes.

By chance, she crosses paths with childhood friend Oscar (Sudeikis). Nice guy Oscar donates unwanted furniture to help Gloria get back on her feet and offers her a job at his bar.

Gloria begins to turn her life around and she forges friendships with Oscar's buddies Garth (Tim Blake Nelson) and Joel (Austin Stowell).

Breaking news about the sudden appearance of a giant creature in Seoul sends shockwaves around the world, and a dumbfounded Gloria discovers she is connected to this horned harbinger of doom.

Flashbacks to a traumatic childhood incident reveal the catalyst for this incredible meeting of human and monster minds.

Colossal is an engrossing and intimate character study with grand ambitions, realised in broad strokes by Vigalondo and his special effects team.

Hathaway welcomes us into her character's delirium, compelling us to root for her as she confronts her addiction head-on and demons closer to home.

Sudeikis is a wonderful foil and there is solid support from Stevens, Nelson and Stowell.

RATING: 7.5/10

KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD *(12A, 126 mins) Action/Adventure/Fantasy/Drama/Romance. Charlie Hunnam, Jude Law, Astrid Berges-Frisbey, Djimon Hounsou, Eric Bana, Aidan Gillen, Kingsley Ben-Adir, Neil Maskell, Geoff Bell, Rob Knighton, David Beckham. Director: Guy Ritchie.*

Several years in the making – all of them wasted – director Guy Ritchie's testosterone-heavy reworking of Arthurian legend is an interminable bore.

A lumbering script, co-written by Joby Harold and Lionel Wigram, pickpockets elements of an origin story from the biblical tale of Moses, Robin Hood and the Marvel Comics universe, with an eye to kick-starting a multi-film mythology filled with familiar characters from olde worlde legend.

Thunderous action sequences appear to have been reconstituted from the cutting-room floor of other blockbusters.

The hero's obligatory training montage is rendered as a superfluous jaunt to a magical realm called the Darklands, where Arthur hones his swordsmanship against a dizzying menagerie of computer-generated snakes, bats, rats and wolves.

It's a triumph of visually arresting yet soulless digital might, awash with dodgy East End geezers who litter Ritchie's oeuvre, including his revisionist take on Sherlock Holmes with Robert Downey Jr.

Female characters are treated with casual disdain, reduced to witches, wenches or eminently expendable spouses and offspring, who can be slain to facilitate the flimsy plot.

Uther Pendragon (Eric Bana), king of the Britons, is betrayed by his power-hungry brother Vortigern (Jude Law), who forges a deadly pact with dark sorcerer Mordred (Rob Knighton).

The king is slain, but not before he can send his first-born son Arthur (Charlie Hunnam) down river to Londinium to be raised in a brothel.

Flanked by mates Back Lack (Neil Maskell) and Wet Stick (Kingsley Ben-Adir), Arthur blossoms into a strapping hunk, who is blissfully unaware of his destiny.

The heir apparent subsequently pulls Excalibur from a stone and is sentenced to death by Vortigern and his snarling henchman Mischief John (Geoff Bell).

Thankfully, a mysterious enchantress known only as The Mage (Astrid Berges-Frisbey) joins forces with Uther's exiled general Sir Bedivere (Djimon Hounsou) and expert archer Goosefat Bill (Aiden Gillen) to save Arthur.

King Arthur: Legend Of The Sword is swashbuckling tosh, hamstrung by lifeless performances, clunky dialogue and inert screen chemistry between Hunnam and Berges-Frisbey.

Ritchie invigorates dull storytelling with trademark hyperkinetic brio and snappy editing, plus a throwaway cameo by David Beckham, who is just as wooden as the uprights he occasionally struck during his glory days with Manchester United.

Sadly, this is two tedious and dispiriting hours of own goals.

RATING: 4/10

KING ARTHUR: Legend of the Sword: Arthur (Charlie Hunnam).

Cake Bookworm

How To Be A Grown-up *by Daisy Buchanan is published in paperback by Headline, priced £14.99 (ebook £6.49).*

This is a warm hug of a book packed full of wise words of reassurance for millennials. Even if you think you're already a grown-up, there is something you can learn from Grazia's agony aunt and Guardian columnist Daisy Buchanan's painfully funny and reassuringly frank look at what it's like transforming into an adult in your 20s and 30s. Think of your most embarrassing moment on your journey to adulthood and Daisy's own experiences are both 10 times worse and laugh-out-loud funny. Daisy's wisdom is a soothing balm for anyone struggling with taking responsibility for themselves and forging a path into adulthood. You might look on this as a self-help book to reach for when feeling anxious, or after a break-up or losing your job, but anyone who is curious about understanding themselves better can benefit hugely. I know I did.

Rating: 9/10

The Thirst *by Jo Nesbo is published in hardback by Harvill Secker, priced £20 (ebook £9.49).*

Jo Nesbo has been a professional footballer, economist, rock star and most recently, a bestselling writer. He's most known for his gritty thrillers that focus on troubled detective Harry Hole, and the Norwegian's latest offering, The Thirst, is as violent as ever. A blood-thirsty serial killer, known as the 'vampirist', is terrorising the streets of Oslo. While his method of using metal teeth to bite and kill his victims is rather far-fetched and fanciful, the fact he targets young women from Tinder makes it seem alarmingly believable. This is a tense and scary tale. If you're partial to bad dreams, don't read this just before bed. With constant twists along the way, it's another gripping read from the king of Scandinavian thrillers.

Rating: 9/10

The Girlfriend *by Michelle Frances is published in paperback by Pan Macmillan, priced £7.99 (ebook 98p).*

Laura and her son Daniel have always been close, but for the past few years, he's been away at university. When he returns home after graduating, she relishes spending time with him. In a matter of days though, Daniel meets Cherry, a bright, ambitious estate agent. Laura invites Cherry over for a family meal, but rather than forging a friendship, the two women get off to a less than auspicious start, and soon the relationship turns from strained to downright poisonous. The novel keeps the reader on a knife-edge throughout and with film rights secured by Andy Serkis's Imaginarium, The Girlfriend looks set to thrill on the big screen too.

Rating: 8/10

Police advise on how to help if you see a dog locked in hot car

Concerned citizens can smash windows – but it is not your first option

Pete Hughes
phughes@nqo.com

Dog owners are advised not to leave a dog unattended in a vehicle during the summer, even with the window open

ANIMAL lovers will sometimes have to decide for themselves whether to smash a car window to free a dog trapped inside, police have said.

As summer approaches, the force said citizens may want to take action if police cannot attend the scene, if they believe the animal is showing signs of heatstroke and if they believe they could defend the action in court on animal welfare grounds.

But officers have also stressed that people should always try to call police first.

The guidance comes after posts recently appeared on social media in Oxfordshire claiming that the official police advice was to take a picture of a trapped animal then break a window as a first course of action.

Thames Valley Police spokesman James Williams said: "Your first step should be to call the police on 101 or 999 in an emergency.

"If the police don't have time to get there, then you have to decide if you should take action.

"Make sure you tell the police what you intend to do, why and, where possible, take images/footage of the dog and the names and numbers of witnesses to the incident."

UK law states that any person has lawful excuse to commit damage if they believe the owner would have consented to the damage.

A situation in which a dog owner might consent to their car window being smashed is if their pet is suffering.

Section four of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 makes it a criminal offence if your actions, or lack of actions, cause an animal to suffer.

Section nine of the same act makes it an offence if someone does not ensure that the needs of an animal for which they are responsible are met in relation to the five freedoms of animal welfare, including freedom from pain and suffering.

In 2010 a Nottinghamshire Police dog handler was found guilty of animal cruelty after leaving his two German Shepherds to die of heatstroke at his force headquarters.

In 2013 a dog belonging to a couple in Bradford died after they left it in their car for an hour in 30 degree heat. They were banned from keeping pets for three years.

Mr Williams added: "Don't break a car window unless certain of your ground and are prepared to defend your actions at court in the unlikely event any action was taken."

The RSPCA seconded the advice.

Spokeswoman Suzanne Norbury said: "If the animal is displaying any sign of heatstroke – such as panting heavily, drooling excessively, is lethargic or uncoordinated, or collapsed and vomiting – call 999 immediately."

If a dog is removed from a car, the RPSCA advises taking it to a shaded or cool area, dousing it with cool water and allowing it to drink small amounts of cool water.

If a dog is not showing signs of heatstroke, the charity advises to establish how long the dog has been in the car and to make a note of the registration. If possible, ask a member of staff for the car park to make an announcement.

Kennel Club secretary Caroline Kisko added: "Owners should never leave a dog unattended in a vehicle or other potentially hot environment, it is not enough to just open a window or leave a supply of water.

"When it's 22°C outside, within an hour the temperature can reach 47°C inside a vehicle, which can result in death."

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Oxfordshire Listings

Events

THURSDAY

Dementia Awareness Information Event: Lake House Care Home, The Green, Banbury. Talk and presentation on dementia and dementia support. Cream tea included. Free. 2.30pm. 07827 235449.

FRIDAY

Bat Identification and Conservation: St Kenelm's Church, Minster Lovell. A talk by Mark Satinet from 4Acre Ecology followed by bat spotting in the ruins and St Kenelm's Church. 8pm. Free.

Knit Knot & Natter: Vale & Downland Museum, 19 Church Street, Wantage. Bring your own project or receive tuition in crafts such as knitting, crochet and weaving. 1.30pm. Free but asked to support the Museum cafe. 01235 771447.

SATURDAY

Artists and Makers Fair: Thame Town Hall, High Street, Thame. 10am. Free. 01844 273069.

Bat Walk: Earth Trust Centre, Little Wittenham. A guided walk with the addition of bat detectors. 8.30pm. £6 per adult, £3 per child. 01865 407792.

Didcot & Oxfordshire Toy Fair: Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot. 10am. £2. Children under 16 free.

Farmoor Reservoir Open Day: Farmoor Reservoir, Cumnor Road, Farmoor. Thames Water and Oxford Ornithological Society open day with guided birdwatching walks. There will also be free taster sessions for sailing and fishing and the binocular and telescope specialists In Focus will be present. 10am. Free.

Friends of St Mary's Church Garden Fete: The Old Vicarage Garden, Church Street, Chipping Norton. 12pm. Free. 01608 643976.

Fritwell Scouts Jumble: Fritwell Village Hall, Fewcott Road, Fritwell. 2pm. Free entry. 07986 520553.

Mollington Fun Dog Show and Fete: Anita's Touring Caravan Park, A423 Mollington, Banbury. 12pm. Adults £1, children free. 01295 750586.

National Garden Scheme: Blenheim Palace, Woodstock.10am. Adult: £4; chd £2. 01993 810530.

Ramblers walk: Priest End, Thame. 5½ mile linear walk to Tiddington for pub or picnic lunch followed at 1.30pm by 4½ mile linear walk on to Wheatley to celebrate 20th anniversary of Thame & Wheatley Ramblers. 10am. 01865 874300.

Spring Plant Sale: St Helen's Church, Church Lane, Dry Sandford. 10am. Free.

Witney Festival of Food and Drink: St Mary's Church, Church Green, Witney. Up to 70 stalls of locally produced, artisan food and drink stalls. Bar and cafe along with live entertainment. Children's tent with food and farm activities. 9.30am. £3 adults, children under 12 free. 07917 126836.

SUNDAY

Classic Oxfordshire: Harwell Campus, Fermi Avenue, Didcot. Bike ride through villages countryside alongside the River Thames up to Abingdon and into the Vale of the White Horse. 7am. 0117 989 7080.

Combe Mill In Steam: Combe Mill, Blenheim Palace Sawmills, Long Hanborough. Themed - Natural History on the Evenlode. 10am. 01993 358694.

Combe Village Garage Sale: The Reading Room, The Green, Combe. 15+ garages will be open in Combe. Maps and refreshments will be available from the Reading Room. 10.30am. £1. 01993 898348.

Drawing from Nature: Earth Trust Centre, Little Wittenham. Explore Little Wittenham Wood with your sketchbook and get top tips from artist Gareth Lloyd. 2pm. £20. 01865 407792.

House & Garden Open: Kingston Bagpuize House, Kingston Bagpuize. Historic house and garden and a family home. Tea room open. Open from 2pm last admission to house 4pm, garden closes at 5.30. 2pm. Adult £6, aged 12-22 £4, under 12 free. 01865 820259.

National Garden Scheme: Dobsons, Sotwell Street, Brightwell cum Sotwell. Dobsons (house not open) has C16 origins: gardens are surrounded by brick and flint walls that are dated by members of the Dobson family. Limited wheelchair access owing to steps. Dogs on leads. Home-made teas in cottage garden. Combined opening with The Priory. 1pm. Combined adult £5; chd free.

National Garden Scheme: The Priory, Sotwell Street, Brightwell cum Sotwell. Newly opening this year. The Priory is a beautiful listed Tudor south-facing house (not open), with a small Italianate gravel garden leading to a larger pretty walled garden with herbaceous plants and rose beds. A plantswoman's garden with many interest specimens. Wheelchair access. Dogs on leads. Home-made teas in cottage garden. Combined opening with Dobsons. 1pm. Combined adult £5; chd free.

National Garden Scheme: The Grove, North Street, Middle Barton. Mature informal plantsman's one-third acre garden planted for year-round interest around C19 Cotswold stone cottage (not open). Plant list and garden history available. Limited wheelchair access. Plant sale. Home-made teas. 1.30pm. Adult £3; chd free.

National Garden Scheme: Broughton Poggs and Filkins Gardens, Various locations, Filkins. Eleven gardens and allotments. Limited wheelchair access in some gardens due to gravel paths. Dogs on leads to some gardens. Plant sale. Home-made teas in Filkins village hall. Contact: www.filkins.org.uk. 2pm. Combined adult £5.50; chd free.

National Garden Scheme: Various locations, Charlbury. Two varied gardens in the centre of this large Cotswold town, in the context of traditional stone houses. Wheelchair access. Plant sale. Home-made teas in St Mary's Church. Also open is Bolters Farm in Chilson. 2pm. Combined adult £5; children free.

National Garden Scheme: Midsummer House, Woolstone, Faringdon. Newly created garden with herbaceous plants brought from their previous garden. Herbaceous border and espaliered Malus Everest. Combined opening with Mill House. 2pm. Combined adult £5; children free.

National Garden Scheme: Woolstone Mill House, Woolstone, Faringdon. Redesigned by new owner, garden designer Julian Spink in 2015. 1.5 acre garden has large mixed perennial beds, and small gravel, cutting, kitchen and bog gardens. Limited wheelchair access. Home-made teas. Combined opening with Midsummer House. 2pm. Combined adult £5; children free.

Open Gardens: Bridge Road, Ickford. A rare opportunity to visit a wide selection of gardens. Entry fee covers parking and a map showing location of all gardens. Tea and homemade cakes available in the beautiful 13th century St Nicholas church. 2pm. £5. 07952 536456.

Ramblers walk: Lambert Hotel, Aston Rowant. Easy six-mile walk via Sydenham. Not suitable for dogs. 10am. 01844 353296.

Senior Specials: Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway, Station Approach, Station Road, Chinnor. All Seniors 60+ travel for only £5. Trains run from 10am. Adult £11, senior £5, child £6. 07979 055366.

To get an event of any kind listed here, enter the details into our easy-to-use online database at thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/events

Please add your event no later than ten days before the day of publication.

MONDAY

Alfie Meets....: Vale & Downland Museum, 19 Church Street, Wantage. New under 5s session. Join Alfie Bear as he meets objects and people from Wantage past and present. 10.30am. Suggested £2 donation per family. 01235 771447.

Dementia Awareness Information Event: The Paddocks, Milton under Wychwood. Talk and presentation on dementia and dementia support. Refreshments included. 2pm. Free. 07827 235449.

TUESDAY

Bicester & Kidlington Ramblers: Meet at the Hensington Road car park, Woodstock. Leisurely five-mile walk from Woodstock and around Blenheim Park. 10am. Free. 07939 826412.

Photography talk by Alan Fretten: Methodist Church Hall, Newbury Street, Wantage. Alan Fretten will talk about his work with the rock band Wishbone Ash and in other fields. 7.30pm. £3 for visitors to Wantage Camera Club.

Ramblers walk: Village Hall, Little Milton. Leisurely 5½ mile walk visiting neighbouring villages with an optional pub stop at the end. 10am. 01844 215364.

Tea Dance: Woodstock Social Club, 44 Oxford Street, Woodstock. 2:00pm. £2. 01993 811473.

WEDNESDAY

Cotswold Decorative & Fine Arts Society Special Interest Day: Bradwell Village Hall, Bradwell Village, Burford. Three separate lectures, with time for discussion and questions. The lectures explain the architecture of each of the major faith traditions. Jon Cannon is an author, television presenter, part-time lecturer and a lay canon at Bristol Cathedral. 10.15am. Non-members £33; incl lunch. Booking essential.

Music

THURSDAY

Broughton Castle, Broughton, Banbury: The Fingask Follies. In aid of mental health charity the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust. Old fashioned drawing room entertainment. Plus wine reception and light supper. £80. 7pm. 01635 869754.

The Oxford Golf Club, Hill Top Road, Oxford: Big Band Evening featuring The Velvet Tones, Sisters of Swing and Andy Townsend's Big Band. Free. 7.45pm. 01865 242158.

The Jericho Tavern, 56 Walton Street, Oxford: Ash Lewis, Bless This Mess, Jae, Laz Cunliffe. Folk and acoustic. 7pm. £7.

The Wheatsheaf, 129 High Street, Oxford: Maciek Pysz. The Spin Jazz Club. Jazz guitarist accompanied by The Spin Trio. 8.30pm. £10, £8 (concs), £6 (students). The Mighty Redox. All original psycho-eclectic rock. 9pm. Downstairs bar. Free.

O2 Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Road, Oxford: The Mission, The Skeletal Family, Pauline Murray. British goth rock veterans. 7pm. £30.95.

The Cock Inn, Combe: Nick Gill. Classic jazz and ragtime piano/vocals. 8-11pm. Free.

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: Ryley Walker, Health & Beauty, Jonny Payne & The Thunder. Folk & blues. 7pm. £12.

FRIDAY

Corn Exchange, Gloucester Street, Faringdon: Steve Knightley. £18. 7pm. 07766 077115.

General Foods S&S Club, Spiceball Park, Banbury: Joe Holic. 9pm. 01295 252852.

Steventon Village Hall, The Green, Steventon: Magical Musicals Concert. £9 (£7 concessions). 7pm.

Wine Vaults, Parsons Street, Banbury: The Summits. Male covers duo. Free. 9pm. 01295 261281.

The Cellar, Frewin Court, Oxford: The Brickwork Lizards, Clark Wiseman. Turkabilly hip hop world jazz collective. 8pm. £5 (adv), £7 (otd).

The Wheatsheaf, 129 High Street, Oxford: Feral Sun, Beth Blade & The Beautiful Disasters, Broken Device. Rock/metal. 7.45pm. £8 (adv), £10 (otd).

Modern Art Oxford, 30 Pembroke Street, Oxford: Goat Girl. Grunge. 8pm. Free.

O2 Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Road, Oxford: Little Brother Eli, Lucy Leave, Harry Pane, Ghosts In The Photographs, Sleepers' Dome. Local bands showcase. 7pm. £8 (adv).

SATURDAY

Aston & Cote Village Hall, Cote Road, Aston: Howard Alden Trio. Jazz. £12.50. 7.30pm. 01993 850164.

Challow Park Concert Hall, Challow Road, Wantage: Paravicini Jazz Quartet. £12. 7.30pm. 07775 904626.

Old Mill Hall, School Lane, Grove: Magical Musicals concert. £9 (£7 concessions). 7pm.

St Edburg's Church, Church Street, Bicester: 150 Years of English Music. By the Munich English Choir including works by Gerald Finzi, Herbert Howells and S S Wesley. Free. 5.30pm. 01869 249555.

The Oxford Harlequins RFC, Marston Ferry Road, Oxford: Wittstock Music Festival. Free. 12pm.

The Wheatsheaf, High Street, Oxford: Unman, Little Death Machine, La Phooka. £4.50, cheaper advance. 8.20pm. 01865 395327.

Tiddy Hall, Shipton Road, Ascott-Under-Wychwood: Melrose Quartet plus support from Fly Yeti Fly. Wychwood Folk Club. £12 in advance, £14 on the door. 8pm. 01993 831427.

O2 Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Road, Oxford: The Verve Experience, Juniper Nights, Dave Hunt. Tribute band celebrating 20th anniversary of release of *Urban Hymns*. 6.30pm. £11.25.

SUNDAY

Wheatley, Church Road, Wheatley: The Wheatley Singers & Friends Concert. £10/£8. 7.30pm. 07885 059633.

Oxford Wine Café, 38 South Parade, Summertown: Jim Mullen and Zoe Francis Trio. Voice, guitar and bass. Jazz. 6.30-9pm. Free.

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: Twisted State Of Mind, Cherokii, Crimson Tusk, Promethean Reign, Burning Horizon. Rock and metal battle of the bands. 7pm. £5 (adv), £7 (otd).

MONDAY

Rose Revived, Newbridge, Witney: Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited. Jazz. 7.30pm. Free.

The Cellar, Frewin Court, Oxford: Beliefs, The Beckoning Fair Ones, Fancy Dress Party. Shoegaze, indie & punk. 7.30pm. £6 (adv).

TUESDAY

St Aldate's Tavern, 108 St Aldate's, Oxford: Osprey & Friends. Local rockers. 8pm. Free.

WEDNESDAY

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: Aoife O'Donovan, Blair Dunlop. Folk/roots. 7.30pm. £15.

The Lamb Inn, 59 Mill Street, Wantage: Dave Moorwood's Rascals of Rhythm. With special guest, brilliant trombonist Kevin Grenfell. 8.30pm. Free.

Theatre

Burton Taylor Studio, Beaumont Street, Oxford: Until May 20, *I Know You.* 7.30pm. £6. May 23-27, *The Oxford German Play: Reigen.* 7.30pm. £6. 01865 305305.

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: May 20, Kevin McCarthy, Eleanor Tiernan, Ben Norris and Dave Hill. Glee comedy. 7.45pm. £15.95. 01865 810000.

The Old Fire Station, 40 George Street, Oxford: May 19, *James Veitch: Game Face.* Geeky comedy about life, love and enabling Bluetooth. 8pm. £12/£10. May 20, *Andy Zaltzman: Plan Z.* 8pm. £15. 01865 263990.

Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, Oxford: Until May 20, *I Capture the Castle.* 7.30pm. £11.50-£28. May 23-27, *Cyrano*. 7.30pm. £11.50-£28. 01865 305305.

New Theatre, George Street, Oxford: Until May 20, *Sister Act.* 7.30. £17.90-£55.40 plus £4 transaction fee. May 22-27, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.* 7.30pm. 16.90-£39.40 plus £4 transaction fee. 0844 871 7615.

The North Wall Arts Centre, South Parade, Summertown: May 18, *Bubble Schmeisis.* Bubbemeises is Yiddish for a grandmother's story, a tall story, an old wives' tale. Writer and street performer Nick Cassenbaum and his klezmer musicians invite you to enjoy a bubbemeises in the warmth of the Canning Town Schvitz, East London's last authentic bath house. 8pm. £14 (concession £12, members £10). May 20, *Susan Calman: The Calman Before the Storm.* 8pm. £16. 01865 319450.

Amey Theatre, Park Road, Abingdon: May 18, NT Live: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* 7pm. £12 / £10. May 24, RSC Live: *Antony and Cleopatra.* 7pm. £12 / £10. 01235 849063.

The Beacon, Portway, Wantage: May 18, NT Live: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* 7pm. £15. 01235 763456.

Chipping Norton Theatre, Spring Street, Chipping Norton: Until May 20, *The Island.* Drama of defiance and determination draws on the stories that linger from Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was held prisoner. 7.45pm. £15, £13 conc. £5 U26. 01608 642350.

Cornerstone Arts Centre, Station Road, Didcot: May 20, Comedy Club. 8pm. £12. 01235 515144.

Corn Exchange, Market Place, Wallingford: Until May 20, *Return to the Forbidden Planet.* Sinodun Players 7.30pm with Saturday matinee at 2.30pm, £15 (under 18s £12 Weds, Thurs & Sat mat) www.cornexchange.org.uk 01491 825000.

Stonesfield Village Hall, Field Close, Stonesfield: May 19, Stand-up Comedy. Troy Hawke, Tom Glover, Luke Honnoraty and Harry Stachin. 8pm. £12.50. 07790 670234.

The Mill Arts Centre, Spiceball Park Road, Banbury: May 19, *Titter Ye Not.* 7.30pm. £14. 01295 279002.

CakeSport

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Wright shines as Banbury cruise

Seamer stars as Sabin's side crush Horspath to hit top spot

CRICKET

OLLIE Wright starred with a superb spell as Banbury thrashed hosts Horspath by nine wickets to set the pace at the top of Division 1.

The seamer returned 4-13 in ten overs as Horspath slumped from 38-0 to 117 all out in the Home Counties Premier League clash.

The visitors knocked off the runs inside 27 overs for their second successive win.

Horspath's opening batsmen Jamie Stead and Robbie Eason started well after being put in to bat.

But Wright dismissed both openers plus Tom Coleman and James Fitzjohn, while Jack Wilkins claimed the valuable scalp of Rameez Raja.

There was no recovery from that. Horspath's top scorer was extras with 31 as they were bowled out in the 44th over.

Although Horspath skipper Will Eason tried eight bowlers, they could not stop Craig Haupt and Lloyd Sabin, with an unbeaten 51 off 68 balls, leading them to a comfortable victory.

Banbury will bid to make it three successive victories when they take on third-placed Henley at Whitepost Road on Saturday.

HORSPATH

J Stead b Wright	7
R Eason c Bartlett b Wright	21
T Coleman c Hawtin b Wright	12
R Raja c Hawtin b Wilkins	10
T Cosford c Hawtin b Wilkins	2
J Fizjohn b Wright	10
S Green not out	20
W Eason run out	2
I Slatcher lbw West	1
J Faruk b West	0
L Belcher run out	1
Extras	31
Total (all out, 43.2 ovs)	117

Fall: 1-38, 2-58, 3-63, 4-73, 5-78, 6-97, 7-104, 8-107, 9-112.
Bowling: Taylor 7-3-16-0, Hill 4-1-25-0, Wright 10-4-13-4, Wilkins 7-0-15-2, West 8.2-1-29-2, Clarke 5-0-12-0, Sabin 2-0-3-0.

BANBURY

C Haupt not out	42
T Bartlett b W Eason	12
L Sabin not out	51
Extras	13
Total (1 wkt, 26.5 ovs)	118

Fall: 1-17.
Bowling: Slatcher 5.5-2-13-0, W Eason 5-1-17-1, Faruk 3-0-19-0, Belcher 4-0-16-0, Cosford 5-0-15-0, Fitzjohn 1-0-13-0, Raja 2-0-12-0, Coleman 1-0-11-0.

Horspath 2pts, Banbury 20

LATEST TABLE

Division 1

	P	W	D	L	Bon	Pts
Banbury	**2**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**40**
H Wycombe	2	2	0	0	0	40
Henley	2	1	0	1	8	28
Oxford	2	1	0	1	7	27
Slough	2	1	0	1	6	26
Tring Park	2	1	0	1	6	26
Great Tew	2	1	0	1	3	23
Horspath	2	1	0	1	3	22
Finchampstead	2	0	0	2	16	16
Burnham	2	0	0	2	13	13

Banbury's Ollie Wright goes close during his match-winning spell against Horspath Picture: Steve Wheeler

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ARIES Mar 21-Apr 19

You may not want to be the centre of attention this week, but you're going to be Aries. Try to enjoy what the coming days have to offer, as I know that by the time this week comes to a close you are going to end up with more possibilities than you've had in the last two years. An ex wants to speak to you for all the wrong reasons. Ring now to hear what your best line of defence would be.

0906 585 4360

TAURUS Apr 20-May 20

Try to prepare yourself as soon as possible for the events you know are ahead of you this week. Preparation and research are essential to your success, and I know that success is important to you Taurus. You want to prove yourself after events from the beginning of the year and I can understand why. Ring now to hear how simply being you is the key to winning everyone over.

0906 585 4361

GEMINI May 21-Jun 20

I can see from your stars that you're hungry for success. I also see that you have been attempting to get one over on someone and you're still trying to get even. Don't make a game out of what can and should be a simple case of acceptance. Those involved want to move forward as much as you do Gemini. Ring now to hear why I know you're going to need to check that your passport is in date this year.

0906 585 4362

CANCER Jun 21-Jul 22

What you think to be promises from close ones, they may see as just a suggestion. Have a back up plan. Ensure you can do what needs to be done under your own steam if need be. What this week offers you is the chance to see that you were more than capable all along. Believe in yourself a little more my friend. If you think, you can be. Ring now so we can talk about last week's drama.

0906 585 4363

LEO Jul 23-Aug 22

If you treat others fairly this week, then they will do the same when the time comes for you to ask them for a favour. I know you have had a lot on your plate over the last few days, but there is nothing that can't be achieved if you're willing to talk about your problems. Come on. For once, put that famous Leo pride to one side. Call now to hear who the stars want you to spend more time with.

0906 585 4364

VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

There is a surge of energy in your chart which is going to be making it impossible for you to concentrate on any one thing for too long. Try to make a mental list of what needs to be done in order of importance, so that you don't let yourself or those close to you down. A new face in your circle links to your future in more ways than you could imagine. Ring now for your lovescope.

0906 585 4365

LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

You may not want what is being offered to you, but at least have the courtesy to listen when others speak. It can make all the difference as to whether or not they listen to you when the time comes. Ground work you do on new business ventures helps you build the firm base you'll need for the next five years. A very colourful professional story is playing out. Ring now. We have much to discuss.

0906 585 4366

SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

You think time is not on your side, but you are wrong. You and I know that it is better to do a little well than a lot badly. You discover this for yourself over the coming days as you receive praise for the things you worked hard at and criticism for the things you did not. News from far away gives you reason to look forward to your most colourful summer yet. Ring now for a full reading.

0906 585 4367

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

You're ahead of your time with your ideas, that is the problem Sagittarius. You also see that certain faces who were willing to support you were simply blowing hot air. The good news is that from Monday you work out who can give you the support you need. One source in particular is set to be of much use. Ring now so we can talk about your recent mixed emotions in relationships.

0906 585 4368

CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

I know you're feeling sensitive Capricorn, but I also know that you have read deeper into current events than you were advised to. Use your element of earth to get back to the basics and to make sense of what can and cannot be done in the weeks ahead. Saturn helps you replenish missing funds. This may come at an awkward price, but one worth paying. Ring now so I can explain in full.

0906 585 4369

AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

After what has been a rocky start, you now start to experience a sense of calm. Don't let this fool you into trusting those who have already let you down more than once this month, or you will only end up backing yourself into a corner you cannot get out of. A split in your circle sees someone free who is sure to be the cause of much gossip and speculation for you. Ring now to understand all.

0906 585 4370

PISCES Feb 19-Mar 20

You and I both know you have said some things you regret. We also know you cannot take them back. What you find yourself given this week is the gift of patience. You're finally willing to let others take their time and work out for themselves what is right and what is wrong. It is this clear vision which gives you the upper hand in love and family affairs. Ring now for a look at the bigger picture.

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Personal Messages

DEAR HEART OF JESUS

in the past I have asked for many favours, this time I ask for this special one (mention it). Take it Dear Heart of Jesus and place it within your own broken heart where your father sees it, then his merciful eyes it will become his favour not mine. Amen. Say for 3 days. Promise publication and favour will be granted. Never known to fail. D.S

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Job opportunities opening up in supermarkets

Yes, supermarkets really are growing super again. New information from Kantar Worldpanel for the 12 weeks ending on April 23 this year shows the overall grocery market has grown by 3.7 per cent.

That's the fastest rate since September 2013 and worth almost £1billion in additional sales.

In fact, all 10 major retailers are showing growth for the first time in three and a half years.

Of course, this is great news for anyone looking to kick start their career in retail with the prospect of new job opportunities on the horizon.

But what does it feel like to be on the supermarket frontline?

We asked Shelley Patterson, a 20-year-old sales assistant working for a major UK supermarket chain.

What's it like working in this kind of retail arena?

"When I first started I was 18 and I found it a bit scary. The shop is massive and on a busy weekend it can feel like there are people everywhere. I found the trick is to stay calm and focus on what I'm supposed to be doing – stacking the shelves or operating the till at the checkout.

That way I can manage the 'rush hour madness' a lot easier.

Do you work regular hours?

"The rota system means I know in advance what hours I'll be working and so, yes, it's easy to plan ahead.

That said, we're a 24-hour store and there are different shift patterns, so you have to be willing to be flexible."

What are the best bits of your week?

"I really love my shifts when I'm working as a customer assistant. You get the freedom to move around the store and make sure shoppers know where different items.

"It's also a great way to meet customers and improve my people skills – my self-confidence has grown so much as a result!"

How do you see yourself progressing?

"Oh, definitely in a management position.

"The chances for promotion are great in a company like this.

"We have close contact every day with our managers, as well as the chance to go on courses to learn new skills.

"Yes, store manager: that's where I'll be!"

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Nissan Micra (2013-2016)
Models Covered
5DR HATCH (1.2 12V, 1.2 DIG-S PETROL)

Introduction

With slicker styling, a much-improved interior, more equipment and better value for money, Nissan's heavily revised fourth generation Micra supermini turned over a new leaf in 2013. As before, it was impressively space efficient and offered the option of a clever supercharged 1.2-litre petrol engine that was not only eager but also both frugal and green. It may be sensible rather than sporty, but this very affordable contender delivers in exactly the areas a small car should. Let's check it out as a used car buy.

The History

Think of a small Nissan and you tend to think of this one, the Micra. It's represented the brand in the supermini segment since the early Eighties, with this fourth generation version taking over the mantle at the end of 2010 before significant improvements in the middle of 2013 brought us the revised model we're going to look at here.

The fact that changes were introduced so early in the product cycle underlined how vital it's always been for the brand to get this car right. This is, after all, a very significant model in Nissan's history, in second generation form the very first Japanese design to win the coveted European Car of the Year award, a recognition of its status as the first Far Eastern supermini purpose-built for Western tastes. To make absolutely sure, Nissan decided to build the MK2 model in Britain and style both that second generation version and its successor with a daring flair that perfectly suited the ever-more image-conscious small car market. These were cars perfectly in tune with their times – which in a way, this one was too.

It stood as a perfect example of the power of global economics. That was the only way to explain how Nissan managed to make the fourth generation Micra cheaper to British buyers, despite switching its production from Sunderland to India. By 2013, the improved MK3 Micra we're going to look at here was being used as part of Nissan's two-tier approach in the small car segment, taking on budget-minded Korean superminis from brands like Hyundai, Kia and Chevrolet. This freed up the larger Note model to attack more expensive European small contenders in the Fiesta and Polo sector.

If you're going to buy a MK4 Micra, this post-2013-era version is the one to have. By this point, quality issues from the Indian factory had been sorted out and nicer cabin materials were being used in the space-efficient interior. Plus a clever supercharged engine option gave pokey power with diesel economy. This model sold until a revolutionary fifth generation Micra was launched early in 2017.

What To Look For

Most owners of revised fourth generation Micras seem to be pretty satisfied with their cars but inevitably, we did come across a few issues. One owner felt that the car got through front tyres more quickly than it should have, the person in question having to replace a set of front tyres at around 25,000 miles. There were also reports of owners having to prematurely replace front offside and front nearside wheel bearings, while one buyer had to pay for a new clutch and slave cylinder not long into his ownership period. Another found she had to pay for new wiper blades every year and thought the car's tracking needed o be corrected more frequently than was normal.

Another owner we found had had to replace the battery under warranty and had a drop link in the suspension fail. We also came across an owner who discovered a small patch of rust on the top rear corner of the car under the tailgate. Other than these things, simply check for the usual small hatch problems – kerbed alloys and interior trim scratches caused by unruly kids.

On The Road

It's now become quite common for auto makers to switch from four to three cylinder engines in their small cars in their quest for greater efficiency. The downside of that is that a three cylinder layout is fundamentally unbalanced – and usually feels it from the moment you set off and your ears begin to adjust to what in many cases is a bit of a din. But not here. In fact, after an initial drive in this Micra, so smooth and melodious was the tone from beneath the bonnet that I had to check the spec sheet to reassure myself that there were actually three cylinders beating there.

There are in this case – whichever flavour of 1.2-litre petrol power is chosen. There's no diesel option and there doesn't need to be because the top 98PS DIG-S variant is pretty much diesel-frugal, potentially returning nearly 70mpg and offering a sub-100g/km CO2 figure. That this Nissan can manage that while still delivering a perky engine capable of 62mph from rest in 11.3s on the way to 112mph is impressive. In the supermini segment in this era, only Ford's Fiesta 1.0-litre EcoBoost 100PS model can match eager performance with green-minded economy in this way – and new versions of that car cost nearly 25% more.

Overall

The Micra, Nissan thinks, should be small, easy to drive and very affordable, both to buy and to run. This improved post-2013 MK4 version ticks all those boxes and in some ways is a very refreshing change in a segment still prone to bring us cars that are ever- larger, sportier, more sophisticated and, inevitably, more expensive. This model takes precisely the opposite approach, simplified to appeal to buyers in more than 160 countries but still intentionally compact, yet deceptively practical. It is in fact one of the most space-efficient cars we can think of.

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